

THE INDYPERCENT

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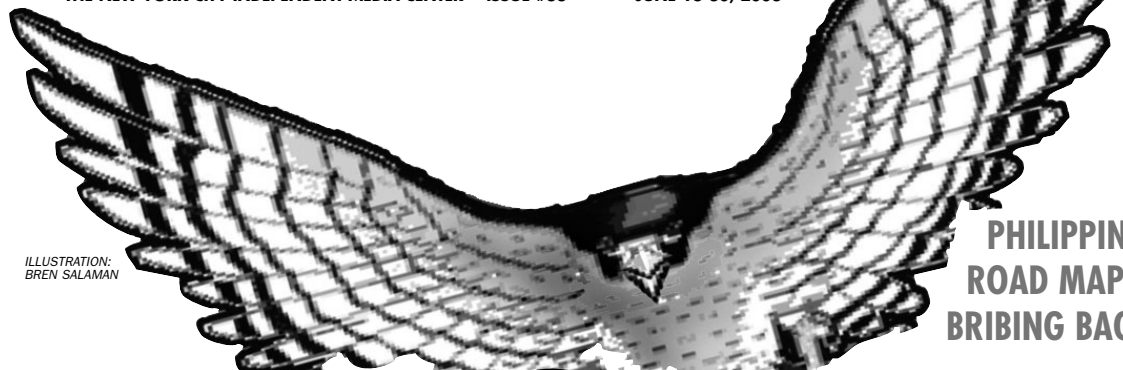


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BREN SALAMAN

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HAWKS TAKE AIM

GUNS 'N GOLD KEEP CONGO IN CONFLICT

By DONALD PANETH

UNITED NATIONS, N.Y. — The volatile situation in the Congo is of immediate concern here.

Observers are referring to the warfare in the Congo as "a world war within a world war" because of the intervention of armies from Rwanda, Uganda, Zimbabwe.

Three aspects of the conflict in which an estimated 3.5 million people have died since 1998 are central to an understanding of it.

First, there is the ethnic fighting in the resource-rich, northeast Ituri district; second, a continuing United Nations investigation of the illegal exploitation of Congolese natural resources; and third, the disastrous history of the Congo since it won its independence from Belgium.

"The ongoing strife in Ituri is a humanitarian catastrophe," U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan reported to the Security Council last month. "Military offensives continue to cause widespread suffering. The illicit exploitation of natural resources has criminalized the conflict, making it all the more difficult to stop."

Annan recommended that the military strength of the U.N. mission in the country be boosted to 10,800 troops and that its mandate be extended to June 2004.

On May 30, the Security Council authorized the dispatch of 1,400 troops. The force would be deployed until Sept. 1, 2003. France, Pakistan, Nigeria and other countries said they would contribute to the deployment. However, Pakistan and Nigeria specified a reservation, saying that the U.N. would have to pay the costs.

The troops would supplement a contingent of 700 Uruguayan soldiers pledged to protect several thousand persons now sheltering within the perimeter of the U.N. com-

pound at Bunia in the Ituri district. The Uruguayans are lightly armed, and may not fire unless attacked.

On June 9-10, 200 French troops arrived in Bunia. Soldiers of the Hema ethnic militia control the town beyond the compound's perimeter. An estimated 430 persons have died in recent clashes between the Hema and Lendu ethnic militias. The Lendus have been expelled from the town.

That is the immediate situation on the ground.

At the same time, a U.N. panel of experts based in Nairobi, Kenya under Security Council direction is providing insight into the fundamental causes of the fighting. The panel is continuing its investigation of 85 multinational enterprises, 18 companies, and 54 individuals making deals in the Congo for its natural resources.

The operations of these parties have received scant attention in the international press.

Yet among the multinational enterprises whose activities are being probed are the Ahmad Diamond Corp. (Belgium); Barclays Bank (United Kingdom); De Beers (South Africa); First Quantum Minerals (Canada); Eagle Wings Resources International (U.S.); Kemet Electronics Corporation (U.S.); Trinitech corporation (U.S.); Nac Kazatomprom (Kazakhstan); Dara Forest (Thailand); Orion Mining (South Africa).

Congolese natural resources include oil and gas, copper, diamonds, coltan, gold, zinc, and cobalt.

The U.N. panel explained in a report last October that the conflict was being fought not only over minerals but farm produce, land and "even tax revenues."

"Criminal groups linked to the armies of Rwanda, Uganda and Zimbabwe and the gov-

ernment of the Congo have benefited from the microconflicts," the panel said. "Those groups will not disband voluntarily even as the foreign military forces continue their withdrawals. They have built up a self-financing war economy centered on mineral exploitation."

Elite networks and powerful individuals are exercising economic control over portions of the Congo, the panel went on. Their tactics are disguised to cover "high levels of theft."

"Local militias and local politicians have supplemented the role that State armies previously played in ensuring access to and control of valuable resources and diverting State revenues," the panel said.

"The looting that was previously conducted by the armies themselves has been replaced with organized systems of embezzlement, tax fraud, extortion, the use of stock options as kickbacks and diversion of State funds conducted by groups that closely resemble criminal organizations."

Current events in the Congo are following closely upon those of the past. The Congo became independent from Belgium on June 30, 1960. In July, Belgian troops flown from Europe intervened in an attempt to protect Belgian interests in the Congo's copper

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REFUGEES: Thousands of displaced Congolese have taken refuge at a U.N. compound in Bunia in the center of the war-torn Ituri district.



new york city independent media center

Email:

imc-nyc-print@indymedia.org

Phone: 212.684.8112

Web:

NYC: www.nyc.indymedia.org

GLOBAL: www.indymedia.org

Office and Mail:

NYC Independent Media Center

34 E. 29th St. 2nd Floor

NY, NY 10016

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We espouse open dialogue and placing the means of communication and creativity back in the hands of the people, away from the drive of profit.

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STRAPHANGERS URGE COURT TO REVERSE UN-FARE SUBWAY HIKE



Take the Appeals Train for a fare rollback say mass transit advocates.

PHOTO: FRED ASKEW.COM

BY JANELLE LEWIS

Disaster! I can't afford it. I won't pay it," says one lifelong New Yorker about the city's recent bus and subway farehikes. He might not have to. A decision on the matter is expected later this month. On June 10, The Straphangers Campaign, the Automobile Club of New York (ACNY) and the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) presented arguments before a panel of judges of the State Court Appellate Division.

The MTA is appealing the May 14 decision by Supreme Court Justice Louis York to roll back transit fares from \$2.00 to \$1.50.

"Today's victory is a victory for truth in government," Gene Russianoff told the *Daily News* when the verdict was announced. Russianoff is staff attorney for the Straphangers Campaign, a consumer advocacy group that filed the suit along with state Senator David Paterson (D-Manhattan).

The MTA is also appealing a June 4 ruling in favor of the ACNY made by Supreme Court Justice Robert Lippman. The ruling called for an end to the toll increases on bridges and tunnels and a refund of the increase to toll payers.

The two lawsuits were combined into the single June 10 appeal.

In the appeal, the MTA argued that it met all legal requirements in presenting to the public its budget outline and plan for closing a \$2.8 billion deficit. The agency maintained that the deficit was real, supporting its assertion with a state comptroller's report – the source of its figure for the budget gap.

The MTA contests the findings of State Comptroller Alan Hevesi and City Comptroller William Thompson, who charged that the MTA engaged in deceptive bookkeeping to fake a deficit when it in fact had a \$83 million surplus. Justices York and Lippman affirmed the findings, ruling that the public notices and hearings held by the MTA intentionally misled the public by overstating the deficit as the primary justification for the fare hikes.

The MTA is retaining private lawyers from the firm of Proskauer Rose for as much as \$400 an hour to defend its claims of poverty.

"Since it is difficult to predict legal needs, it makes more sense for us to use outside firms for certain legal services than to employ a whole cadre of specialized in-house attorneys," MTA spokesman John McCarthy told *The Daily News*.

The MTA claims it did not hide \$512 million in surplus funds, but made a justified business decision to spread the remaining money from 2002 over future years, in part to pay debt and plug budget gaps. It

also insists that the financial information it presented in public hearings was a summary of backup documents; it claims that the second set of books is really a master spreadsheet, simply a more detailed version of the plan used by the agency's staffers.

"They don't believe that they misled the public.... What we see as deception, they see as multiyear planning," says Russianoff, who is confident that the Appellate Division will uphold the ruling.

WHEN BUSH COMES TO SHOVE...WHERE DO YOU TURN FOR NEWS?



Naomi Klein says *The Independent* "mixes the spirit of direct action with a searing critique of corporate power." Drawing upon the global network of

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IN BRIEF

CITY COUNCIL APPROVES WATER FILTRATION PLAN

In an action that allows the New York State legislature to move forward with a controversial Giuliani-era plan to build a massive underground water-filtration plant in Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx, the New York City council voted on June 13 to approve construction of the plant.

"Imagine for a moment that they were going to build a \$1.5 billion project four times larger than the World Trade Center in the middle of Central Park," argued Bronx Councilman Oliver Koppel in opposing the plan. "Do you think for a moment that anybody in Manhattan would accept that?"

The plant would occupy an area of eight to ten acres and house over 460,000 gallons of chemicals labeled "hazardous substances" by the EPA. Construction of the plant could take up to eight years and result in major disturbances for northwest Bronx residents in terms of continual trucking loads, heavy construction equipment and the displacement of thousands of rats.

The plant would also help stimulate a huge burst of further development in Westchester and Putnam Counties, which in turn would decimate sensitive wetlands that have helped make the Croton watershed a source of clean drinking water for New York City and its northern suburbs for the past 150 years.

ANGRY WOMEN BASH BUSH

Activists gathered in the courtyard of St. Mark's Church June 9 to level charges against the Bush administration. One by one women took the stage, each reading a charge against the administration's policies. Each charge ended with the words "Scream out!", which signaled another woman on the stage to give her best scream. The screams varied from ear-popping wails and operatic screaming, to a woman screaming in sign language. SCREAM OUT was initiated by performance artist Karen Finley and organized by the Women's Action Coalition.

See www.wacnyc.net

BUSH IN NYC, GROUPS PLAN PROTEST

On June 23 President George W. Bush will be in New York City fundraising for his 2004 campaign. Outside the President's location at the Sheraton Hotel (W. 52nd St. and 7th Ave) activists from United For Peace and Justice, and Planned Parenthood have planned a protest, beginning at 5 p.m. *The New York Times* estimates Bush will rake in a record \$5 million at the fundraiser.

ACORN FIGHTS FOR HOUSING

Dozens of demonstrators from ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now) entered the Newark Housing Authority June 6 in an action leading to a brief but tense standoff with local police.

Protesters were angered by the large number of applicants put on waiting lists as the city struggles to meet the growing demand for federal housing vouchers.

Voucher waiting lists have swelled in recent years as residential rents have risen, workers have lost jobs, and residents have been displaced from high-rise housing developments slated for demolition.

In Newark alone, more than 20,000 people applied for the federal housing voucher program the last time applications were sought by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. A recently issued Newark waiting list contained an additional 17,000 names.

RAISING RENTS, RAISING HELL: An angry tenant (left) speaks against proposed rent hikes at a June 17 public hearing held at Cooper Union while more tenants (below) protested outside. As *The Independent* goes to press, the Rent Guidelines Board is on the verge of finalizing rent increases of approximately 5.5 - 8.5 percent for New York's one million rent-stabilized apartments. This would be the largest increase since 1989.



PHOTOS: FRED ASKEW.COM

BUSH'S PUBLIC HOUSING PLAN: WRECKING BALL IN DISGUISE

BY CHRIS ANDERSON

A Bush administration proposal to effectively eliminate the Housing Choice Voucher Program, commonly known as Section 8, is coming under fire from housing advocates and politicians across the country.

Most recently, New York City Council Speaker Gifford Miller and Council Member Margarita Lopez held a June 11 press conference to blast Bush's so-called Section 8 "reform plan."

"Section 8 Housing Vouchers are an essential tool for helping people put a roof over their heads," said Miller. "We are... extremely wary of attempts by the Bush administration to 'reform' the Section 8 program in such a way to eliminate it entirely."

The Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program was launched in 1998 by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to replace the original Section 8 Certificate Program, which began in 1974.

According to the National Housing Law Project, Section 8 provides "housing assistance, in the form of direct payments to private landlords, secured from a local housing authority that low-income people

can use to rent apartments and homes on the private market."

Participation is limited to very low-income families; more than 2 million Americans utilize the program, including 84,000 New York City families.

Under Bush's proposal, introduced in the 2003 HUD budget, the federal Section 8 program would be replaced by a state block-grant program called Housing Assistance for Needy Families (HANF), transferring program administration and funding from the federal to the state level.

This federal-to-state shift is similar to Clinton's 1996 Welfare Reform act, including the acronym (welfare is now known as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, or TANF).

Many policy analysts fear that the fallout from Section 8 reform will be similar as well. "We are extremely concerned that the HANF block grant, in any form, may not keep pace with the costs of providing rental assistance," announced the National Affordable Housing Management Association (NAHMA) in a recent study of the proposal.

"States are currently having significant budget difficulties," the study continued. "If they are given responsibility for

HANF, and if the federal government does not sufficiently fund the program, it is unclear whether states would be financially able to continue serving the same number of voucher recipients."

In addition, NAHMA expressed concern regarding the structural difficulties in reforming a \$13 billion federal program, and echoed the fears of Council Speaker Miller that "HANF could be the first step in de-federalizing or eliminating rental housing assistance altogether." According to Miller, the Bush proposal contains "a provision that would allow state governments to end support for recipients of vouchers in 2009."

Lopez bluntly noted that the economic consequences of the proposed Section 8 changes would be "devastating." "If poor people have to pay more than 30 percent of their adjusted income for rents," said Lopez, "not only will the city see an increase in evictions, [but] there will inevitably be an increase in homelessness."

A variant of Bush's plan is working its way through Congress. On April 29, Representative Bob Ney (R-OH) introduced HR 1841, the Housing Assistance to Needy Families Act (HANF) on behalf of the President. Senator Wayne Allard (R-CO) later introduced an almost identical companion bill, S 947.

Most Americans know Congressman Ney as the patriot who changed "French fries" to "freedom fries" on the House cafeteria menu during the recent Iraq war. Housing advocates also know Ney as the representative pushing a mortgage-industry backed "anti-predatory lending" bill that would actually eliminate the modest consumer protections gained through state legislation cracking down on mortgage loan sharks.

But even a right-wing zealot like Ney seems wary of the full scope of Bush's proposed changes to Section 8.

"Maybe the patient doesn't need open-heart surgery, but maybe some exploratory surgery," Ney remarked at a recent hearing of the House Financial Services housing subcommittee.

There is little expectation that Section 8 reform will move through Congress until at least 2004.

Regardless of the outcome this year, housing advocates are on notice that the Bush administration has its sights trained on yet another federal program designed to help America's poor.

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ROAD MAP TO NOWHERE

Israel shows its deadly "good will"

By KRISTEN ESS

GAZA STRIP, JUNE 14 — The idea of a cease fire between the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli military government is, of course, misleading. It suggests that there are two equal sides at war.

Israel receives more than 12 million dollars a day from the United States to supplement its massive arsenal of destruction. It has not ended its illegal occupation of Palestinian lands. Nor has it ceased imposing curfews, building settlements, checkpoints and a towering apartheid wall around the West Bank and southern Gaza Strip, or using Apache helicopters, tanks and soldiers to kill Palestinians.

On June 5, for example, Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) assassinated five Palestinians in the West Bank near the city of Tulkuram. And as the "road map" talks continued, so did the Israeli attacks. Although targeted assassinations are illegal under international law, on June 10 Israeli forces fired seven rockets from a U.S.-made Apache into a car, wounding their "target" — Hamas spokesman Abdel Aziz al-Rantisi — and killing a little girl and two other women who were on the street.

On June 12, IOF attacked Gaza City, killing seven Palestinians, including an infant. That attack was one in a four-day spree of extra-judicial killings by Israel. It has stepped up the attacks as Bush speaks of vigilance against Palestinian "terrorism." In just two days five such Israeli attacks killed 23 Palestinians; 18 of them non-targeted civilians.

These assassinations are carried out against Palestinians the Israeli government "suspects" of a crime, i.e., resisting the occupation. There is no trial, no evidence presented, no defense.

On June 3, Israel released 100 out of more than 6,000 Palestinian political prisoners its holding illegally. Most of those released were being held without charge or

trial in "administrative detention" — a six-month sentence that the Israeli military can renew indefinitely.

A Palestinian journalist told me that among the released he spoke with in Ramallah, "most only had six or seven days left."

The Israeli military government calls the releases a mark of its "good will."

One of the released is a 23-year-old man taken out of his sleep at 2 a.m. six months ago. He was given six months detention without charge or trial. His sentence was up in a few days so he was released.

The release of Abu Sukar, who was imprisoned by the Israelis for 27 years, was a political gesture. He told the press, "I am happy to see my children who are grown now, my grandchildren, and all of my family, but this is not complete. This is not peace. There will never be peace until the children I raised inside the prison are also released."

Israel began releasing the political prisoners three weeks ago. Over the course of two days, it released eight West Bank Palestinians and deported them directly to Gaza, another act illegal under international law.

For most of May, the Gaza Strip was closed to everyone: foreigners, journalists and diplomats. During the closure, Palestinians trapped inside reported intense Israeli attacks by sea, air and land, and killing with impunity.

In early June, a few foreigners were allowed in, some working with the European Commission. They were greeted by Israeli gunfire as they passed through Beit Hanoun.

For the past several months the IOF has been destroying the northern Gaza Strip bit by bit — demolishing houses, displacing hundreds of Bedouins, ripping up orange groves, degrading the soil. The two Israeli settlements nearby are expanding. One of the women working for the European Commission told me, "Beit Hanoun is gone."

Israel says that of roughly 200 illegal settlements, it will dismantle only 15. Only four of these are inhabited. The road map calls for dismantling all settlements erected since March 2001. Israel inserted the word, "unauthorized," meaning settlements that the government considers illegal, ignoring the fact that all settlements in occupied areas are by definition illegal.

U.S. estimates are that 100 illegal settlements have been built since March 2001. U.N. Resolutions 242 and 338 and the Fourth Geneva Convention render all Israeli settlement and construction illegal. In addition, the settlements violate UNSCR 452 from 1979, which demands, "the Government and people of Israel to cease... the establishment, construction and planning of settlements in the Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem."

The resolutions have never been enforced. The 15 settlements are referred to as dummy outposts used for public relations moves. Another empty gesture.

Israel said it would lift the closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip so that low-wage Palestinian workers can work for the Israeli economy. A local human rights worker said, "The Israelis have fired 20,000 imported foreign workers because they were too expensive."

One strategy of the occupation is to destroy infrastructure, farmland and local industry, in addition to making commerce and industry within the West Bank and Gaza Strip impossible. All of these actions create a devastating dependence on Israeli products and jobs.

In the same breath that Israel spoke of easing the closure, it also said that its sol-

diers would remain in place. The day after the announcement, the IOF attacked Nablus and imposed a curfew on Ramallah. Soldiers were filmed beating residents in the streets. A man trapped at the Qalandia checkpoint reported via telephone that there were up to 200 Israeli soldiers, Apaches and tanks. He said, "There's nowhere to go to get away."

Residents of Jenin and Nablus are still suffering under curfews. In just two days, 50 Palestinians in Nablus were treated for bullet and shrapnel wounds, 12 of them small children.

This is happening amid "peace" talks. The road map itself is loaded with points that have been negotiated in the past, ones the Israelis have not been honoring, and points that cannot be negotiated. U.N. Resolution 194 demands the "right of return" for all Palestinians as a collective and an individual right. As such, it cannot be negotiated. This hasn't stopped the U.S. and Israeli governments from telling Palestinians that there will be no right of return.

Last week a Palestinian journalist said he spent five hours traveling from Ramallah to Bethlehem, a trip that would normally take only 40 minutes.

He says, "Now there are more checkpoints than before this week. I think at least three or four more now around Ramallah."

I ask him why the Israelis are building more checkpoints. He replies, "When they want to show the world that they are implementing the road map, they will show pictures of themselves on the news removing these new checkpoints and the regular ones will remain. They want to trick the world as usual."

DAVID vs. GOLIATH

THE PALESTINIAN - ISRAELI CONFLICT BY THE NUMBERS

POPULATION OF ISRAEL: 6,120,000

Jews : **81.4** percent
Arabs, Druzes and others: **18.6** percent

Population of the West Bank
and Gaza Strip: **3,390,000**

MILITARY

ISRAEL:

- **3,850** battle tanks,
- **8,100** other armored vehicles and
- **1,300** artillery and mortar pieces,
- plus **742** combat aircraft and
- **115** attack helicopters

(Center for Strategic and International Studies).

- **100 to 400** nuclear weapons, and chemical and biological weapons programs.
- There is extensive evidence that Israel is using chemical weapons—possibly nerve gas—against Palestinians.

See: www.mediamonitors.net/james-brooks2.html

MILITARY EXPENDITURES (2000):

Israel: **9.373** billion, or **\$1,512** per person.

Egypt: **\$45** per person; Syria: **\$47**.

(This does not include \$5.2 billion in annual U.S. aid to Israel.)

- Active duty forces in Israel comprise **172,500** personnel, plus another **400,000** reservists.
- Israeli military resisters (Yesh Gvul): **1,125**

THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY Spent \$500 million on police and security forces in 1999.

PALESTINIAN SECURITY FORCES NUMBER AT MOST 40,000.

There are thousands of others in militias of Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Al-Aqsa.

The heaviest weapons possessed by Palestinian militias are homemade mortars, rockets and mines.

CASUALTIES

PALESTINIANS

killed as of June 14, 2003: **2,386**
(Palestine Red Crescent Society)

injured: **23,094**

ISRAELIS

killed as of June 15, 2003: **806**
(Israeli Defense Forces):

injured: **5,586**

MEDICAL PERSONNEL killed by Israeli

forces: **15** (another 275 have been wounded) (Palestine Monitor)

JOURNALISTS killed by Israeli forces: 8

(another 295 have been wounded)

ECONOMY

ISRAEL'S ECONOMY is about **40** times the size of the West Bank and Gaza's.

Israel has systematically destroyed the economy, infrastructure and farmland of Palestine, pushing **75** percent of Palestinians into poverty.

THE WAR ON THE LAND

Length of Berlin Wall: **96** miles

Proposed length of Israel's wall around the West Bank and East Jerusalem (from an interview Ariel Sharon gave to Yedioth Ahronoth): **625** miles

Palestinian land seized or destroyed by Israel since Sept. 2000: **21,546** dunums — one dunum is a quarter acre (lawsociety.org)

Amount of West Bank that will be seized to build the 30-foot-high wall: **up to 10** percent

Houses destroyed since 1967 in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem: **10,000**, including at least 3,200 since September 2000.

(Global Campaign to Rebuild Palestinian Homes)

Israeli settlers in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem: **More than 400,000**

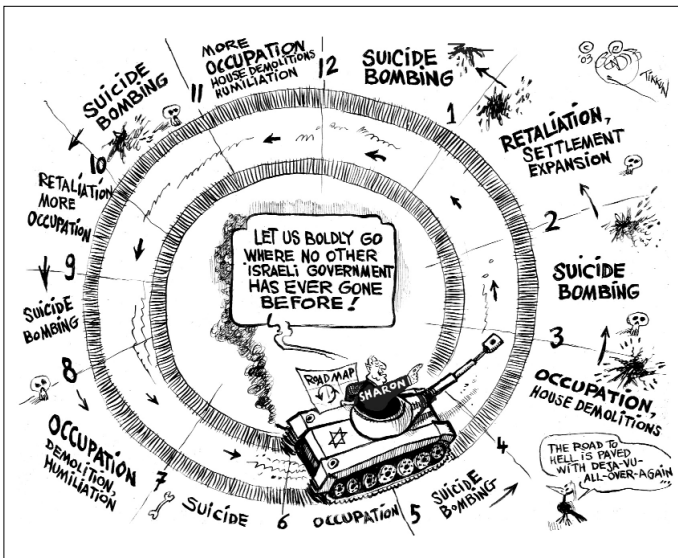
Palestinians currently being held in illegal Israeli detention camps: **More than 6,000**

INTERNATIONAL LAW

U.N. RESOLUTIONS ignored or violated by Israel since 1948: **68**

U.N. RESOLUTIONS ignored or violated by Iraq under Saddam Hussein: **16**

Israel is the only country in the Middle East to have not signed, ratified or acceded to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty or the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention.





BY ANNIE VENESKY

THE PEACE FROM HELL LINGERS

Bribery was a big part of United States strategy in its takeover of Iraq. Shouldn't it matter?

Much was made in the alternative media of how the fall of the statue of Saddam Hussein was a staged event. Foreign news reports have also revealed that the so-called fall of Baghdad was a hoax.

None other than U.S. Army Commander Tommy Franks told *The Independent* in a May 24 report that senior Iraqi military commanders were bribed not to fight by American special forces. "I had letters from Iraqi generals saying 'I now work for you,'" he said.

The American strategy of bribery was corroborated in a May 26 *Herald-Sun* (Australia) article, in which former Iraqi officials claimed Hussein was "betrayed by three cousins, senior military officers and a former cabinet minister, in moves that allowed the fall of Baghdad."

And a May 25 UPI report said that the French newspaper, *Le Journal du Dimanche*, named Soufiane al-Tikriti, head of the Special Republican Guard in Baghdad, as being paid several hundred thousand dollars by the United States to order his troops not to defend the capital.

April reports in the *Asia Times* and the *Arab Voice* first raised the issue, the latter calling the melting away of Iraqi forces, a "safqa," or a deal made fast in secrecy.

No doubt we should be glad many lives were saved and untold destruction prevented by the deal. No one is arguing with the Pentagon's claim in *The Independent* that "bribing the senior officers was a cost-effective method of fighting and one that led to fewer casualties." No one, for sure, is arguing with the virtues of corporate diplomacy.

But what about its downside – excluding, of course, deception of historical proportions that has become the hallmark of the Bush administration? Shouldn't this be a bigger deal? Did a compromise with Iraqi forces have something to do with the fact that its oil fields were not torched as in the Gulf War?

One might also ask why Dick Cheney got his trousers in a bunch over late-March reports in the *Toronto Star*, *Philadelphia Daily News*, *New York Times*, *Reuters*, *Agence France-Presse*, and the *Miami Herald* – to name a few – quoting him as saying, days before the attack, that "Saddam Hussein's... regime would 'collapse like a house of cards.'"

Or why his personal press secretary, Jennifer Millerwise, went out of her way to call each of these news outlets in the first days of April demanding a correction to their reports (which she got).

Could the U.S. military "victory" become suspect in American eyes were it revealed that we paid the Iraqis to throw the

fight? Possibly.

But most Americans don't seem to care much about the war anymore – including why we went – as long as we won. A new poll done by the Program on International Policy Attitudes shows Americans are unaware that weapons of mass destruction, the official reason given for war, have not been found in Iraq. Some 34 percent of respondents said they believed the United States has found WMD, while 7 percent were unsure.

This general unconcern amounts to Christmas in July for Cheney and his defense contracting friends, who have an interest in advancing the myth that contemporary warfare is as "smart" and clean as ever. Proving that a light, hyper-tech – and downsized – military virtually assures victory, makes the so-called Bush doctrine of "pre-emptive war" increasingly viable and palatable in the court of domestic public opinion.

The existence of a deal, however, may have given the lie to the supremacy of "War-Lite" in the face of a guerrilla threat, and moreover, to what may lay ahead in Iraq.

Iraqis have already initiated armed resistance against the American occupation. Since Bush declared the end of "combat operations" on May 2, 47 American and British soldiers have been killed, many in hit-and-run ambushes. U.S. Central Command has called for an increase in the number of troops in Iraq, now at 150,000.

As military analyst William S. Lind suggests in the May 24 *Counterpunch*, the deal may not have worked out in favor of the

American conquerors after all, but may have been Saddam Hussein's best strategy. "Saddam's guerrillas are doing their best to guarantee that the disorder continues... I think it could succeed in driving the U.S. out..." he notes. "The ghost of the Vietnam War looms large."

And it was already looming as undersupplied U.S. forces began to falter after encountering "irregular" resistance south of Baghdad just days before the melting away of the Republican Guard. The ominous comments of General William Wallace, the U.S. army's senior commander in Iraq, resounded in the press, "The enemy we're fighting is different from the one we'd bargained against."

Less reported was that it may not have been – not entirely. Slate.com's Fred Kaplan wrote in his March 28 *War Stories* column that guerrilla-style "militia fighters did play a crucial role in a major war game designed to simulate combat in Iraq – but the Pentagon officials who managed the game simply disregarded or overruled the militias' most devastating moves."

"War-Lite" was officially considered "a great success." However, a retired Marine Corps general, a lead commander in the games, complained, according to *Army Times*, "Instead of a free-play, two-sided game... it became a scripted exercise."

Perhaps they need have only prepared for a scripted exercise. But if, as Molly Ivins recently noted, the unscripted "peace from hell" lingers on, all bets – and secret deals – may be off.

U.S. TRIES TO RETAKE PHILIPPINES

BY IMC STAFF

"I've heard many versions of the story," Josefina Toledo (not her real name) says remembering the murder of her husband in 1989.

His killing came three years after the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos was ousted by the "People Power" revolution in 1986. Corazon Aquino rode into the presidency fueled by a nation's hope that democracy and development would replace decades of repression and exploitation.

Those hopes were soon dissipated.

For one, Aquino's government continued the war against the New People's Army (NPA), the army of the Philippine Communist Party. The military campaigns resulted in brutal murders, imprisonments and disappearances, with Toldeo's husband being one of the victims.

"People who didn't belong in the village were rounded up, considered New People's Army supporters, and killed by the military. Another version is that the 'rebels' were in the village and the military just opened fired on the whole town," Toledo said.

"Anyone fighting for human rights was branded as a 'rebel' by the government," commented Toledo, who is a women's rights activist.

Fast-forward 14 years. Terrorism has replaced communism as the new enemy in the Philippines and around the world. But the victims remain the same: activists, Muslims and civilians.

On April 21, 2003, for instance, two human rights workers – Eden Marcellana, secretary-general of Karapatan (Rights)-Southern Tagalog, and Eddie Gumanoy, a peasant leader – were murdered on the island of Mindoro about 150 km southeast of the capital Manila. Marcellana and Gumanoy were abducted while on a fact-finding mission to investigate reported abuses in Gloria and surrounding towns, allegedly by soldiers from the 204th Infantry Brigade.

The Philippines is an archipelago in the South China Sea. The north is mostly Catholic and the south Muslim. The Philippines were originally colonized by the Spanish. In 1898, the fledgling U.S. empire muscled its way in, killing anywhere from 200,000 to 600,000 over the next two decades. Consequently, Filipinos have had a historic aversion to foreign troops on their soil.

After the attacks of Sept. 11, the Philippines became one of the main fronts in the U.S.-led "war on terror." A special deployment of 660 U.S. troops landed in January 2002 to eliminate Abu Sayyaf, a "rebel" group that broke away from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in the late



1990s and which is allegedly linked to Al Qaeda. (No evidence of this link has been supplied and most observers consider Abu Sayyaf to be a criminal gang, not a political movement.)

This initial operation was named *Balikatan 01-1* (Tagalog for "shoulder-to-shoulder"), and marked the first major build-up of U.S. troops in the Philippines since U.S. military bases at Clark Airfield and Subic Bay Naval Base were closed in the early 1990s.

The 1999 U.S.-Republic of Philippines Visiting Forces Agreement has proved to be a loophole that allows the presence of troops to conduct trainings and war games. It is under the agreement that U.S. troops and the Filipino military are conducting joint exercises in which they fight side-by-side and train together.

According to the Nuclear-Free Philippines Coalition, the agreement may result in the deployment of nuclear weapons in the Philippines, which is expressly banned by the nation's laws.

Another operation last year, *Balikatan 02-1*, was supposed to be a conventional military exercise lasting six months. But the troops remained past July 31, in violation of the Philippine constitution, which prohibits "foreign military bases, troops or facilities... except under a treaty duly concurred by the Senate, and when the Congress so requires, ratified by a majority of the votes cast by the peo-

ple in a national referendum."

The constitutionality of the *Balikatan* operations and U.S. military involvement has been a major point of contention. Philippine Vice President Teofisto Guingona resigned last year as foreign minister after clashing with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo over the presence of U.S. troops on Basilan. He declared that the United States would be "overstepping its bounds if it [engages] in combat in the Philippines, even against terrorists.... If U.S. forces will be involved in combat operations and possibly kill Filipinos, they will be violating our sovereignty."

Despite protests, President Arroyo has supported the Bush Administration's war on terror, taking aim at Islamic militants in the south and a re-energized NPA. Along with Abu Sayyaf, the regime has targeted the Moro National Liberation Front and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. Ignoring widespread opposition, Arroyo signed the Military Logistics and Support Agreement, allowing the U.S. to use Philippines facilities for its military operations in the region.

President Arroyo visited Washington on May 19 and was promised \$30 million in military aid, which was in addition to the \$92 million military and economic assistance package she received in a previous visit to Washington in November 2001.

Balikatan 03-1, the most recent Pentagon operation involving up to 3,000 troops in Western Mindanao and scheduled for June, is currently on hold due to the Pentagon's declaration that the operation will reach far beyond normal military exercises.

"This is not just an exercise," said one Pentagon official, "it is a no-holds barred effort."

That effort appears to be aimed at China, as outlined in a report by the RAND Corporation. Titled "The Role of South East Asia in U.S. Strategy Toward China," the report, issued in 2000, states: "China's emergence as a major regional power over the next 10 to 15 years could intensify United States-People's Republic of China competition in Southeast Asia and increase the potential for armed conflict. The United States is currently the dominant extraregional power in Southeast Asia.... Economic growth in the Asia-Pacific region, which is important to the economic security and well-being of the United States and other powers, depends on preserving American presence and influence in the region and unrestricted access to sea lanes."

Now living in the United States, Toledo is concerned about the intentions of the Bush administration. "Bush wants to reopen military bases that were closed." And she worries that "More militarization in the villages will mean greater technology to wage war" with devastating consequences for all Filipinos.

Bennett Baumer contributed to this report.

A HISTORY OF STRIKEBREAKING

**From Blackjacks to Briefcases:
A History of Commercialized Strikebreaking and
Unionbusting in the United States**

Robert Michael Smith

OHIO UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2003.

REVIEWED BY TONY PECINOVSKY

Robert Michael Smith's "From Blackjacks to Briefcases: A History of Commercialized Strikebreaking and Unionbusting in the United States" is a welcome contribution to the historiography of American labor/management relations.

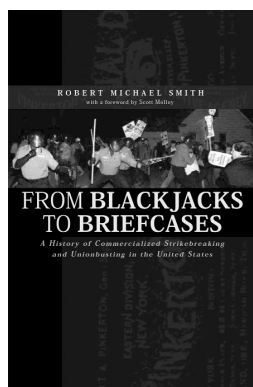
Smith begins by chronicling the beginnings of the first professional strikebreaking agency, the Pinkerton National Detective Agency. By providing "guards" to "protect" replacement workers from striking Illinois miners in 1866, the Pinkerton's first foray into strikebreaking proved very profitable. The Pinkertons probably remain the best-known strikebreakers today.

While their methods were brutal and primitive (and only partially successful) the Pinkertons quickly grew to be respected by industrialists and robber barons. Armed Pinkerton guards would escort scabs into a factory, plant or mine, all under the eye of watchmen in towers with machine guns fixed on the strikers.

After the success of the Pinkertons, hundreds of strikebreaking agencies sprung up across the nation. The Baldwin-Felts Agency provided "labor discipline services" to mine owners in West Virginia, instituting "feudal-like control over their workers," harassing union organizers "from the time they stepped off the train until the time they left."

The labor movement in the United States continued to advance, however, and by the early 20th century workers had achieved minimum governmental protections. Strikebreakers now had to look for new and subtler ways to influence the outcome of strikes.

Smith tells us that beyond simply providing "guards," professional strikebreakers began to employ an army of replacement workers, skilled in whatever trade was needed, and ready to travel to any location at any time.



**"Beyond providing 'guards,'
professional strikebreakers
have also employed armies
of replacement workers
ready to travel to any
location at any time."**

began to rely more heavily on spies and espionage, which created less antagonism than overt acts. With an emphasis on undercover work, the Pinkerton National Detective Agency became the most important supplier of industrial spies in the country, according to the author.

By providing "undercover men skilled at destroying unions from within" the Pinkertons were able to sabotage many organizing campaigns, and weaken rank-and-file support in many already established union locals. Smith writes

James A. Farley, known as the "King of the Strikebreakers," boasted of his roster of 35,000 transit workers to the New York City Interborough Rapid Transit Company. "I will send for these men wherever they happen to be, and pay their fare to the strike center," he told the IRT. "I can reach them at a minute's notice at any time."

During the labor upsurges of the Great Depression, strikebreakers and unionbusters

that when the Western Federation of Miners (WFM) walked out of the mines, A.W. Gratias, the union relief administrator and secret Pinkerton stool, pared down relief expenditures "to cause disaffection and get the men against the union."

Although the Pinkertons dominated much of the union-busting industry, they were not alone. One competitor bragged in an industry journal, "We are prepared to place secret operatives who are skilled mechanics in any shop, mill or factory, to discover whether any labor organizing is being done."

Another unionbusting company announced to prospective clients that it would have several delegates at the annual American Federation of Labor (AFL) convention. They added, "for the sum of fifteen dollars" they would provide "a full and complete report of the entire proceedings."

While these stealth maneuvers have continued, and in many ways intensified, unionbusting and strikebreaking agencies have also refined additional, subtler techniques.

By the 1960s, agencies began hosting monthly seminars designed to educate employers about how to respond to an organizing campaign. Fred Long, of the West Coast Industrial Relations Association, said at a seminar, once a union files for an election, "You got at least sixty days to hire a hell of a lot of people..."

Long advised employers to flood the shop, workplace or plant with new employees who have been screened to be anti-union, and then defeat the union in the election. As an organizer I've seen this happen.

Also, instead of thugs armed with rifles, modern agencies use technology to videotape, photograph and even wiretap union members and supporters.

While many of us associate union members with blue-collar employees, professional white-collar workers are also joining unions. These doctors, nurses, technicians, among many other professions, have also had to deal with the professional unionbuster and strikebreaker. A major flaw in Smith's book is its lack of information on unionbusting in the white-collar workforce.

Despite this, "From Blackjack to Briefcases" is a valuable resource for anyone interested in economic and social justice.

UNION TURNS ON ITS WORKERS

By SASHA NEVSKAYA

Five 32B-J Service Workers International Union members came to their classes on the night of Feb. 28, only to find empty rooms. The teachers' disappearance is only the tip of an iceberg in a messy underwater money battle.

The principal players in this story include the Consortium for Workers Education (CWE), 32 B-J and Local 2, AFT. CWE is a non-profit agency that provides training and education for New York unions and locals. CWE teachers unionized with the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) in 1993, and Local 2, AFT was subsequently founded.

Problems arose when 43 teachers were fired from their jobs at 32 B-J from Feb. 28 to March 6 without any notice. Some came to class and were escorted out of the 32 B-J building. Students were told that their teachers were sick. The fired teachers were

then promised replacement jobs by the CWE management.

The spontaneous firing, followed by CWE rejection of further requests to place teachers according to their seniority within a week of lay-offs, violates four articles of the UFT-CWE contract, which expires June 30. After these events, the likelihood of making a new contract is in question.

For months Local 2 sought explanation from 32 B-J and CWE and support from UFT.

"All we were getting was a deafening silence," says Local 2 official, Myles Ephraim.

CWE was formed in 1985 and receives funding from New York State. Its city supporters include NYC Department of Employment and the United Way. CWE has its fair share of internal scandals. The founder Barry Feinstein is an expelled Teamster student accused of stealing \$400,000 from the union. CWE also holds

a sad statistic of 90 percent part-time employment.

Every year CWE distributes grants among its member unions. Last year CWE gave 32B-J \$300,000 to run English as a Second Language programs and basic computer classes. 32B-J Director of Benefit Funds, Mary Ellen Boyd, states in a letter that 32B-J ran over budget in 2002, and CWE encouraged 32B-J to continue with classes and covered the costs. Similar CWE support was sought this year, when the 32B-J went over budget again. However, a financial disagreement between 32B-J and CWE in a meeting on Feb. 28 led the union to expel teachers.

"32 B-J never contacted our chapter," says Nick Bedell, a full-time teacher and representative for Local 2. "It is out of ordinary for a union to treat another union like this." Along with other Local 2 members, Bedell believes that 32 B-J's response to the situation was due to the fear of not receiving the grant next year. The controversy lies in the fact that 32 B-J was able to afford new teachers shortly after the scandal.

Ephraim says the new teachers were hired through a 32 B-J Teamster contract sustained by the Tomas Shortman Fund – a joint labor-management program that 32 B-J negotiated with contributing employers. "The details were never explained to us," adds Ephraim.

In their attempt to be heard on May 22, Local 2 organized an informational picket in front of 32 B-J and appealed to its members to contact their management and protest the situation. Randy Weingarten who

appeared at the Local 2 chapter meeting on June 6 called the rally a "trap." Facing upcoming tough negotiations and dealing with cuts to UFT funding, Weingarten is in a tough spot and not willing to ruin relationships with other unions.

Even though 32 B-J apologized to Local 2 and UFT three months later and promised its loyal support, CWE has failed to provide any explanation. Moreover, on June 5 CWE turned down 29 of 30 articles on the Local 2 new contract proposal. CWE issued its own proposal that largely inhibits full-time teacher benefits and is completed with a disclosure statement that, in witty legal terms, allows CWE to avoid the contract. Asked for a comment, Debi Buxton – CWE director of education didn't return phone calls.

Tangled in union bureaucracy are the lives of 43 Local 2 teachers. Michael Palmer has been unemployed since March. "I believe in unions, but what happened was nothing short of union busting," he says. Palmer came to teach on February 28 and was escorted out in the middle of the class.

"I consider teaching a gift, I never thought such a wonderful thing would become a dispute," says Michele Fulves, another 32 B-J teacher. She adds that a lot of her students called her after the event and said they've had no motivation to go to class.

CWE declares that it has a mission to "enrich the lives of workers and their families." Ironically, the working-class students and disillusioned teachers suffer most through the complex financial games of those who claim to help them.

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VERMONT JOURNALIST FIRED FOR UNION ACTIVITY OWNER TRIES TO MAKE EXAMPLE OF REPORTER

BY TONY PECINOVSKY

In Brattleboro, Vermont, a town of 12,000, where tourism and the power plant are the largest employers, one of the most significant union struggles since Federal Communications Commission (FCC) media deregulation is unfolding.

The local daily newspaper is the *Brattleboro Reformer*, with a circulation of 11,500, and owned by the Dean Singleton MediaNews Group, the seventh largest newspaper company in the United States. The daily paper has collided head-on with the Paper, Allied-Industrial, Chemical and Energy Workers International union (PACE) over wages, dignity, respect and quality of journalism.

And the first casualty in this struggle for union recognition is Eesha Williams, who was recently fired from the *Reformer*. Williams, the author of "Grassroots Journalism: A Practical Manual for Doing the Kind of News Writing That Doesn't Just Get People Angry, But Active - That Doesn't Just Inform, But Inspires," started working for the *Reformer* about a year ago, and was fired four days after making public his support of the union.

The *Reformer* claims Williams was in "breach of journalistic ethics," and that his firing has nothing to do with his union activity. To PACE and its supporters the *Reformer's* claims are suspect, especially since there were no complaints issued against Williams prior to the organizing campaign.

Williams has had more front-page articles in the time he worked for the *Reformer* than any other reporter. Which led him to ask, "Why run my articles on the front-page if I'm in breach of journalistic ethics?"

According to Williams, the campaign to unionize started last fall, but had been brewing since 1995 when the Singleton Group acquired the paper and wages went down immediately. "Some workers, who have been here for 20 years, are making less now than they were in 1995," Williams said.

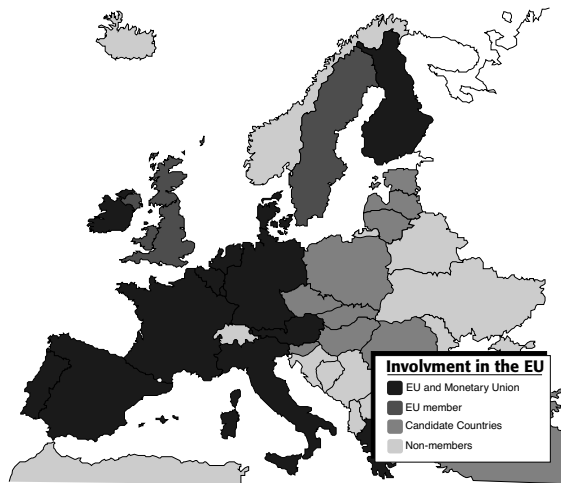
The average yearly salary for the 41 *Reformer* employees eligible to join PACE is \$20,000, about half of what union newspaper employees make. "The union is widely supported among the staff," said Williams, adding, "In any other industrial country in the world we would already have our union."

Dean Singleton, the notoriously anti-union Colorado billionaire who owns 48 daily and 121 weekly newspapers in the U.S., is also head of the Newspaper Association of America, which represents the interests of newspaper owners. The MediaNews Group was also one of the principal lobbyists for the recent gutting of FCC cross-ownership rules.

At the Russian-American Media Entrepreneurship Dialogue, held in the Kremlin in 2002, Singleton expressed his views on media. With his "good friend" George W. Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin present, Singleton said, "Media cannot be independent without economic viability. And that viability must come without government participation."

However, Singleton failed to mention the dependence of corporate sponsorship of media on advertising and profits, which leads to self-censorship and an undemocratic media. In his disregard for democratic participation, Singleton sees no problem seeking the participation of the Nashville-based, union-busting law firm King and Ballou, who has sent "representatives" to Brattleboro to intimidate, confuse and coerce union members.

This struggle is being watched closely by other newspaper workers nationally. Singleton is attempting to make an example of Williams and the other *Reformer* employees. Their success or defeat will have long-lasting repercussions throughout the newspaper industry. One thing is certain. The same billion-dollar media companies that have lobbied the FCC to steal our media and make it less democratic are also the same billion-dollar media companies that have denied workers their constitutional right to organize into a union.



EURO-POWER EU Emerges From Long Slumber

BY DERQ QUIGGLE

BONN, GERMANY—Europe has awakened. Its post-Cold War slumber is ended. German-Franco apostasy from NATO may presage a brave, new dispensation for the union of European nations.

As Germany's slyest political philosopher, Peter Sloterdijk, has long envisaged: "The absurd and joyless imitation of the United States of America by the United States of Europe" appears to be exhausted. Yet the true political nature of the beast slouching in Brussels remains ambiguous.

The European Union (EU) now comprises a common parliament with a president, a bill of rights, a common currency, a capital city, a flag, common license plates and passports, and a court—all the trappings of a European super-state increasingly capable and determined to pose a defiant alternative to Bush's unilateral imperialism.

EU optimists describe a creature born from the ruins of 1945 when Western Europeans institutionalized the horror of war and determined to settle conflicts within a trans-European apparatus. Thus, the EU should be viewed as a symbol of a historical lesson painfully learned.

And, therefore, the EU is a bastion of peace.

EU pessimists invoke Churchill's call for a "kind of United States of Europe" during a 1946 speech at Zurich University. They recall the European Community and how it was formed in 1967 of various industrial entities: The European Coal & Steel Community and the European Atomic Energy Community. The EC later evolved into the EU.

Traditionally, opposition to the EU stems from the far right, particularly from British Conservatives. But recently, EU criticism has arisen from the left. Right and left EU critics argue that the EU is accountable only to career politicians, bureaucrats, big business and bankers. They are highly dubious about EU claims of democracy because EU parliamentarians are not elected directly.

Moreover, Alex Callinicos, speaking to the *Socialist Worker* of England, explains that the Treaty of Maastricht "served to hardwire neo-liberal economic policies into the EU. Control over interest rates was handed over to the unelected European Central Bank,

while states were required to push through massive cuts in public spending in order to qualify for euro membership. Worse still, under the 1996 growth and stability pact their finances are permanently monitored by the European Commission to ensure that they don't stray from neo-liberal orthodoxy."

The EU is, therefore, a bastion of commerce.

EU realists point out that, because the coal and steel industries had been the cylinders of the Nazi war machine, these industries were believed too inherently dangerous to be given into the powder-burned hands of a single European nation. Coal, steel and, later, atomic resources were to be shared among European nations once enemies. Thus, argue the realists, the EU is a bastion of commerce being made to serve the ends of perpetual peace.

The question facing Europeans today is whether or not the EU is to be another Bretton Woods institution. Bretton Woods, New Hampshire is where the conference was convened, directly after World War II and attended by American, British, and European economists and civil servants, that established the World Bank, IMF and GATT. These free-market bastions were conjured up to resurrect a bombed-out global economy.

During the Cold War, an incipient EU, like the Bretton Woods triad, was occulted both by commands from NATO and threats from Moscow. And the institution remained in hibernation.

Rip Van Winkle rubbed the sand from his eyes in the late nineties when 12 European nations adopted the Euro as a single currency. For the first time since the end of the Second World War, the American dollar faced serious exchange competition. Nevertheless, during that ecstatic moment just before Sept. 11 when the Dow Jones was soaring higher than the Twin Towers, the euro's political and economic significance went largely ignored by Americans and Europeans alike.

But, as the World Policy Institute's EU-expert Andrew Reding declares, that significance can no longer be avoided: Europe is gradually emerging as the world's new superpower. Within a couple of decades, the EU may equal—if not surpass—the United States as the dominant economic force on the world stage.

IN BRIEF

ARMY MAG TO TROOPS: WE'RE HERE FOR THE PEOPLE

"The U.S. army has launched a glossy patriotic magazine to rally its 3rd Infantry Division, whose troops face hostile action in the badlands of western Iraq a full two months after Saddam Hussein's ouster," Agence France-Press reports. "Called the 'Liberator', the 16-page in-house publication carries rousing reports from the field to win over homesick troops who might be doubting the rationale for the US presence more than six months after they first arrived in Kuwait to train for the invasion." Specialist Jacob Boyer said in the 5,000-copy launch edition, "Forget about weapons. Forget about national defense. I've found my reason for being here. It's the people." Not surprisingly, the publication lacks any Iraqi voices or any criticism of U.S. forces.

IRAQ BIOWEAPONS

During his trip to Europe earlier this month, President George Bush claimed that U.S. occupation forces in Iraq had "found the weapons of mass destruction". The claim was based on the discovery of two trailers bearing laboratory equipment.

On June 8, the *Observer* revealed that the trailers contained precisely the kind of hydrogen-producing equipment for balloons described by the scientists questioned by U.S. intelligence. The equipment was sold to Iraq in 1987 by the British Marconi company, now known as AMS, when both Washington and London were supporting Saddam Hussein's regime in its war against Iran.

WAR IN THE CONGO

continued from page 1

deposits. Their intervention set off a four-year war.

A 20,000-man U.N. force was committed in a peacemaking attempt.

In early 1961, Congolese Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba was murdered. Joseph Mobutu, chief of staff of the Congolese army, seized power on Sept. 13. On Sept. 17 U.N. Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld was killed in a plane crash about which questions still remain. Hammarskjöld was on his way to Ndola, Northern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) where cease-fire talks were to be held.

Fighting continued for almost three more years. With U.S. support, Mobutu remained in power until 1997. Mobutu is described in the Statesman's Yearbook 2003 as "one of the most destructive tyrants of the African independence era."

On the night of May 15-16, 1997, Mobutu fled the country, and Laurent-Desire Kabila who had led a revolt against his rule came to power. On Jan. 16, 2001, Kabila was assassinated; his son, Joseph, succeeded him.

External forces once again entered the Congo to separate it from its wealth.

The future of the Congo, its population of 47 million, and its vast resources, continues to be up for grabs, for plundering, subject to lawlessness, human rights violations, sexual abuse and rape of women, and the forced enlistment of children as soldiers.

The authority of the Congo's central government does not extend to its resources. The struggle for possession of them is being carried out extra-legally, violently. International efforts to control the violence are minimal, limited to areas where civilians are identifiable and directly threatened.

WATER CRISIS LEVEL RISING

BY DONALD PANETH

UNITED NATIONS, N.Y. — Many of the world's "natural underground reservoirs," or aquifers, upon which 2 billion people depend for drinking water and irrigation, are under increasing stress.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) warns in a recent report that water — its use, replacement, scarcity and conservation — is a key issue for both rich and poor, developed and developing countries.

Over half the people in the world could be living in severely water-stressed areas by 2032, UNEP estimates. West Asia, which includes the Arabian Peninsula and the Eastern Mediterranean countries of Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine Territories, is likely to be the most seriously affected.

Even now, rapid population growth in some areas of that region is triggering water scarcities. Over 80 percent of the water is used for agriculture. Demand is outstripping supply, especially on the Arabian Peninsula.

Linked to water supply are the fates of 12 of the world's megacities, whose populations exceed 10 million — Bangkok, Beijing, Buenos Aires, Cairo, Calcutta, Dhaka, Jakarta, London, Manila, Mexico City, Shanghai and Tehran.

Rural areas can also be heavily dependent on groundwater. UNEP highlights rural India, where 80 per-

cent of drinking water and 50 percent of irrigation water are brought to the surface from a network of 3 million hand-pumped wells.

In some areas, an influx of seawater into underground aquifers is becoming an increasing problem. Groundwater salinity in some coastal aquifers in Lebanon has risen in recent years from 340 milligrams per liter to 22,000 milligrams per liter.

The United States is not unaffected. In Arizona, 400 million cubic meters of groundwater are being removed annually, which is about double the amount being replaced by rainfall.

Almost a fifth of the water in storage in the huge Ogalla/High Plains Aquifer of the Midwest has been removed. The water table there has fallen in recent decades by, on average, three meters and up to 30 meters in some places.

Brian Morris, principal hydrogeologist at the British Geological Survey and a participant in the report, said: "The difficulty in managing groundwaters lies in the fact that they are often easy and relatively cheap to tap. What is needed is pragmatic management such as increasing public and government awareness, supporting community management, and encouraging the use of incentives and disincentives."

UNEP observed that many potential improvements and remedies were politically and social difficult unless long-term goals were adopted.

- Water makes up 60 to 70 percent (by weight) of all living organisms.
- The total amount of water on earth barely changes from year to year. The hydrological cycle of evaporation and precipitation circulates the earth's water between the oceans, land and the atmosphere.
- Icecaps and glaciers hold 74 percent of the world's freshwater. Almost all the rest is deep underground, or locked in soils as moisture or permafrost. Only 0.3 percent of the world's freshwater is found in rivers or lakes.
- One in six people have no regular access to safe drinking water.
- More than twice that number (2.4 billion people) lack access to adequate sanitation facilities.
- In Africa, 300 million people live without basic sanitation and hygiene, an increase of 70 million since 1990.
- Unsanitary water, which provides a breeding ground for parasites, amoebas and bacteria, damages the health of 1.2 billion people a year.
- Water-borne diseases are responsible for 80 percent of illnesses and deaths in the developing world. More than 2.2 million people die each year from diseases associated with poor water and sanitary conditions.
- More than 80 countries currently have serious water shortages.
- Within 25 years, half the world's population could have trouble finding enough fresh water for drinking and irrigation.
- The cost of providing safe drinking water and proper sanitation to everyone in the world by 2025 would be \$180 billion a year, two to three times greater than present investments.

Source: UNER

IN BRIEF

FEDERAL JURY FINDS 3 INS AGENTS GUILTY

Three Immigration and Naturalization Service agents were found guilty by a Federal jury in Houston on June 9 of depriving the civil rights of a Mexican national who sustained a broken neck while in their custody.

The historic verdict marks the first conviction of INS agents for civil rights violations in a federal criminal court.

In a 2002 house raid in Byran, Texas, Serafin Olvera sustained injuries when one of the agents performed a knee drop onto his back. He was then pepper-sprayed directly in the face for refusing orders to move. Olvera, 47, had lived in the U.S. since 1977. He suffered a broken neck and was left quadriplegic.

He was taken to the hospital only after the witnesses from the house raid had been deported back to Mexico. The father of five died 11 months later.

See more coverage:
www.houston.indymedia.org

HOUSE PASSES AMENDMENT BANNING FLAG BURNING

By a lopsided vote of 300 to 125, the House of Representatives has once again approved a constitutional amendment that would grant Congress "the power to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States." The proposed amendment has gained new momentum in the aftermath of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

In order to become law, the Flag Amendment would need to be approved by the Senate and then two-thirds of the 50 states. While First Amendment defenders report they have a majority of state legislatures on board, the decision in the Senate is less certain. Previous anti-burning amendments have died there.

YET ANOTHER BUSH COURT NOMINEE UNDER FIRE

With the *New York Times* and other mainstream media sources reporting a pending vacancy on the Supreme Court, a recent Bush Circuit Court of Appeals nominee has come under attack from pro-choice and women's rights advocates.

According to NARAL Pro-Choice America, the nominee, Bill Pryor, "is stark evidence of President Bush's determination to undo the right of American women to freedom of choice." NARAL continues by noting that "Pryor personifies the essence of the Bush Administration plan to pack the courts with right-wing ideologues. He is a committed anti-choice activist with a politicized view of the role of the courts."

PUBLIC CITIZEN: FTAA NEGOTIATIONS REACH NEW LOW

Recent negotiations over the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA) have reached a new low in terms of transparency and inclusiveness, Public Citizen said recently.

A "mini-ministerial meeting" at Wye River in Maryland will include only 15 of the 34 countries involved in the negotiations. "The Bush administration planned to push the FTAA through by dictation, not negotiation, to ensure an agreement that suited U.S. corporate interests but no one else," said Lori Wallach, director of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch. "Now, though, the FTAA has become a real negotiation, with other countries making demands on the U.S. that are giving the administration political heartburn."

FOOD

WTO AND SUBSIDIES: U.S. PUSHES GM FOODS

BY VANESSA HRADSKY

On June 20-25, U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman will host 180 of the world's trade ministers as they convene for the Ministerial Conference and Expo on Agricultural Science and Technology in Sacramento, CA. The USDA plans to use the meeting to promote its biotech agenda, which includes strong support for genetically modified (GM) foods.

But millions of farmers around the world are opposed to the use of GM foods, arguing that they pose significant harm to local ecologies and biodiversity, as well as create greater dependence on the commercial seed market.

In 1998, all African nations, with the exception of South Africa, rejected U.S. attempts to force GM crops on the continent by declaring, "We strongly object that the image of the poor and hungry from our

countries is being used by giant multinational corporations to push a technology that is neither safe, environmentally friendly, nor economically beneficial to us."

Yet during the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa last year, the U.S. government said it would only give technological assistance if these countries opened markets for U.S. biotech corporations and produce GM food. The U.S. government also threatened WTO sanctions against any nation that regulates, restricts or labels GM food or crops on the grounds that such restrictions were "creating barriers to trade."

The U.S.-dominated GM industry is big business these days, and the United States has a vested interest in countries that buy GM foods.

Large biotech firms like Monsanto have used their considerable wealth to influence U.S. policy by giving donations to hundreds of congressmen as well as to key members of the Bush administration.

Critics of the WTO argue that wealthy, Western nations take advantage of the organization's complex trade regulations to manipulate poorer nations.

In May 2002, Bush signed legislation giving U.S. farmers \$190 billion in subsidies over 10 years, in stark contrast to the free market principles his administration advocates. The bill gives U.S. farmers secure revenues by increasing price subsidies (in some cases, by 80 percent) for various products, including wheat, corn, soybeans, rice and cotton. Some of these subsidies go to America's 25,000 cotton farmers, who, according to Oxfam, boast an average net worth of \$800,000. In comparison, the average annual income for the same farmers in

Burkina Faso is \$200.

The European Union also shares in the blame.

It spends \$41 billion a year on agricultural subsidies, including export subsidies. Subsidizing farm products at home allows farmers to lower prices on exports and make up the difference with government money. For the developing world, however, this means that importing goods is often cheaper than producing them locally, which forces local farmers out of business.

So while the U.S. and EU look to the WTO to further open markets in the developing world, they are closing their own markets by skewing prices to their advantage.

"For any amount of money we put into our farmers' hands, other world farmers become disadvantaged," said Niel Ritchie, national organizer with the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy. "The U.S. has gone beyond everything it called for in trade talks for less restrictive trade systems."

Perhaps the double standard the U.S. and EU employ

will convince the rest of the world that the WTO is too flawed to succeed, as many of its critics have argued for years. The Sacramento conference should be a good indication of the road ahead.



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